

stan four

The most sophisticated and complete validation of Brakhage's work comes from critics like Fred Camper and Marjorie Keller who approach Brakhage with some distance from the mythology of the maker as legend and supreme authority on his own work (the problem of Sitney's general approach--one always thinks that Sitney has accepted Brakhage at face value as presented by the maker.) For example, in discussing Song 13 Camper points out that it is a film about cinema (hallmark of the modernist phase of romantic art), that it is about landscape and specifically the theme of wilderness vs. civilization, the machine in the garden, those long traditional American themes, and that it is reflexive of the filmmaker's own presence, literally because the window he is shooting through at times produces a reflection of the filmmaker, and thus gives us his image trace as well as his presence as the holder and operator of the camera. The film is also rhythmically sophisticated, with an externally produced flicker effect, as well as a rhythm as well in the splicing of the 8mm film which puts a horizontal bar across the screen at each splice, and a certain personal obscurity as well, implied if not activated, by the referential elements.

description of film: shooting through the window of a moving train which is sometimes seeing a landscape of flat plains, and sometimes looking out on other trains which are passing or being passed at different speeds, and which we sometimes see through to the landscape beyond. The camera seems to be moving from right to left through the landscape and this direction of movement is continued in the two short different sections which conclude the film, one being shot from a car of trees and houses with the car stopping at the end of that shot, and a shot out of an airplane of sky and cloud formations.

Camper makes a good case for the value of the piece lying in its density, and he even extends the discussion to a comparison with late Cezanne landscapes, occupying a position between the impressionist movement and the cubist movement in painting. The density of artistic concern, the complex organic unity of the piece, for Camper marks its duality. At the same time, Bill Stamets film dah dah has the same features and could be argued for in the same way.